

ט' אב תשפ"ג

DeVAsh

July 26-27, 2023



הלכה • Halakhah

According to the Mishnah (Ta'anit 4:6), Tisha B'Av is the date the בית המקדש (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Holy Temple) in Yerushalayim was destroyed about 2,500 years ago, and then again about 2,000 years ago. It was a special place where people from all over the world, Jewish or not, could go to worship and feel close to God. Because of our sadness about not having this place anymore, we have some practices to help us feel and appreciate what we lost. This is called אבלות (aveilut, mourning).

1. Sitting on the floor

DO

It's a sign of mourning to sit on the floor, not a chair. A lot of communities do this in the evening and morning tefillot of Tisha B'Av. But if you have any trouble sitting on the floor, there is no mitzvah to do so (Bah Orah Hayyim 559:1).

2. Reading Eikhah

This book of Tanakh is a collection of poetry about the destruction of the first Beit Ha-Mikdash. We read it publicly in a sad melody. Most communities read Eikhah at night, as Tisha B'Av begins.

3. Saying Kinnot

These are poems about the destruction of the first and second Beit Ha-Mikdash, and also other tragedies in Jewish history including the Crusades and the expulsion from Spain and the Holocaust. There are kinnot for Tisha B'Av night and kinnot for Tisha B'Av morning.



DON'T

1. No eating or drinking

Adults fast the whole day, from the night before. Kids can participate by not eating their favorite foods or treats (Mishnah Berurah 550:5).

2. No bathing and washing

The Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 554:7) says we should not wash any part of our bodies on Tisha B'Av. We are allowed to wash off dirt or germs, though (Shulhan Arukh 554:9).

3. No leather shoes

The Mishnah (Ta'anit 1:4) says we shouldn't wear shoes on fast days. The Shulhan Arukh (554:16) says not to wear shoes with any leather in them. Part of the reason is to make ourselves uncomfortable, so if you're able to wear non-leather shoes that are also a little less comfortable than what you normally wear, that's preferred.

4. No greeting each other

There's a custom not to say, "Hi," (or, "good evening," or any other kind of greeting) to other people. But, if someone who doesn't know this rule says, "Hi," to you, you can respond. It's important not to hurt another person's feelings, but it's also important to still show that it's a sad day by not being overly excited.

5. No learning Torah

A general rule on Tisha B'Av is that we try to avoid doing things that make us happy—and what is happier than learning Torah?! The only parts of Torah we're allowed to learn on this day are those with topics specific to Tisha B'Av, like Eikhah or the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash (Mishneh Torah, Ta'anit 5:10), and like this special edition of Devash.



מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The Talmud teaches that the Second Beit Ha-Mikdash was destroyed because people at the time hated each other for no good reason (Yoma 9b). This is called שְׂנֵאת הֶחָנּוּם (sin'at hinam). The Torah teaches us not to hate each other (Vayikra 19:17-18), and when people break this commandment it's usually not for a very good reason..

In another place in the Talmud (Bavli Gittin 55a-58a), there's a long collection of stories that provide more details about the events leading up to the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash. Here's one of these stories. It's an example of the kind of sin'at hinam that led to the destruction.

The Story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza

Yerushalayim was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza.

There was a certain person who loved Kamtza and hated Bar Kamtza.

When that person made a party he told his servant, "Go and bring Kamtza." The servant went and brought Bar Kamtza (by accident).

אָקאַמץ אַבֿר קאַמץ אַרױס ירושלים.

דערהואַ גבֿראַ דערקומיה קאַמץ
וּבַעַל דְּבָרֶיהָ בֵּר קַמְצָא.
עבֵד סְעוּדָתָא אָמַר לֵיהּ
לְשִׁמְעִיה: זֵיל אִיתִי לִי קַמְצָא.
אֲזַל אִיתִי לֵיהּ בֵּר קַמְצָא.

- ◆ Do you think Bar Kamtza was aware that the host didn't like him? Do you think he felt the same way? If he did, why might he have gone to the party? What do you think Bar Kamtza was expecting or hoping would happen?

When the host found Bar Kamtza sitting there (at the party) he said, "Since you're my enemy, what are you doing here?! Get up and get out!!"

אַתָּא אַשְׁכַּחיה דְּהוּה יְתִיב, אָמַר
לֵיה: מַבְדִּי הָהוּא גַבֿראַ בַּעַל דְּבָבָא
דְּהוּהוּא גַבֿראַ הוּא מַאי בַּעִית
הָכָא? קוּם פּוּק.

- ◆ The host must have lots of friends at the party. Why do you think he focuses on Bar Kamtza?
- ◆ How do you think Bar Kamtza is feeling in this moment? What do you think he'll want to do? What would you do at this moment if something like this happened to you?



אָמַר לֵיה: הוּאִיל וְאַתָּא שְׂבִקוּ וְיַהֲבִנָּא לָךְ דְּמִי מָה
דְּאַכִּילָנָא וְשָׁתִּינָא.
אָמַר לֵיה: לֹא.
אָמַר לֵיה: יַהֲבִנָּא לָךְ דְּמִי פִלְגָא דְּסְעוּדָתִיךָ.
אָמַר לֵיה: לֹא.

Bar Kamtza answered, "Since I am already here, let me stay and I will pay you for what I eat and drink."

The host said, "No."

Bar Kamtza said, "Let me pay for half of your party."

The host said, "No."

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Bar Kamtza said, "Let me pay for your entire party."
The host said, "No."
He grabbed Bar Kamtza with his own hands, stood him up, and threw him out.

אמר ליה: יהיבנא לך דמי בוליה
סעודתיה.
אמר ליה: לא.
נקטיה בידיה ואוקמיה ואפקיה.

- Do you think Bar Kamtza is having fun, especially after being asked by the host to leave? So why doesn't Bar Kamtza want to leave the party? How would it feel to be asked to leave? Why is staying at the party so important to Bar Kamtza?
- What do you think of Bar Kamtza's offer to pay for his meal? Why is he even willing to go as far as paying for the whole party? Doesn't that seem like a lot?!
- Why doesn't the host just say ok to Bar Kamtza's generous offer? What might the host be feeling?

אמר: הואיל והווי יתבי רבנן ולא מחו ביה שמע מינה
קא ניקא להו. איזיל איכול בהו קורצא בי מלכא.
אזל אמר ליה לקיסר: מרדו בך יהודאי.

Bar Kamtza said: Since there were Rabbis sitting there and they did not stop the host, they must have approved of what he did. Now I will go try to get the government to destroy them.

He went to the Caesar (the king of the Romans) and said, "The Jews are rebelling against you."

The story continues with the Caesar testing the Jews' loyalty to him. Bar Kamtza makes sure they fail his test, and the story ends with the Caesar bringing the Roman army to destroy the Beit Ha-Mikdash.



- Do you think the rabbis actually agreed with the host? Why didn't they say something?
- What do you think of Bar Kamtza's actions in the end? Did he overreact?
- What could every character in this story have done differently?
- Why do you think the Talmud tells this story? What are we supposed to learn from the tragedy of the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash?