

The “Drei Vochen” (“The Three Weeks”)

**Shiva Asar B’Tammuz (17 Tammuz) to Tisha B’av (9 Av) 5772,
July 8 to July 29, 2012**

The three weeks between Shiva Assar B’Tammuz and Tisha B’av mark a period of sadness and mourning — framed by two fast days — in which we remember some of the greatest tragedies of our history, including the destruction of the First and Second Temples and the exiles which followed. During this period, festivities and indulgences are avoided or limited. For example, traditionally, we do not schedule weddings and other joyous occasions during the Three Weeks. In fulfillment of the Rabbinic dictum “When Av begins our joy is diminished” (Mishna Ta’anit 4:6), from 1 Av (Rosh Chodesh) to 9 Av, we take on other restrictions. For example, many avoid eating meat and drinking wine during this period, except on Shabbat.

On the 17th of Tammuz, in the civil year 70 C.E., Roman legions breached the walls of Jerusalem. This led quickly to the total downfall of Jerusalem three weeks later, on Tisha B’Av, when the Temple was destroyed and the Second Exile began. This year, the 17th of Tammuz falls on Shabbat. We may not fast on Shabbat, so the fast is postponed until Sunday, 18 Tammuz or July 8. The fast begins before daybreak, 3:48A.M and continues until 9:02 P.M.

Tisha B’av, the Ninth of Av, is the saddest day of the Jewish year. The First Temple was destroyed on this day by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E, and the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 C.E. Apart from Yom Kippur, Tisha B’av is the only full Jewish fast day, which means that we fast from sundown to sundown. This year, 9 Av also falls on Shabbat, so the fast is observed the next day. It begins Saturday night, July 28 at 8:15 P.M. and continues through Sunday evening, July 29, 8:45 P.M.

As on Yom Kippur, eating, drinking, bathing, anointing one’s body with cosmetics, wearing leather shoes and sexual intercourse are forbidden. Even the study of Torah, except for sorrowful texts like the Book of Job, are prohibited, since the study of Torah is a joyous activity.

Tisha B’av begins with a sad but beautiful service, which will begin Saturday night, July 28, at 9:00 P.M. in the Goldman Center Social Hall. We pray the brief Ma’ariv evening services in a hushed tone, and then (if it is physically possible) the worshippers sit on the floor for the chanting of Lamentations and the singing of Kinot (hymns) in an exquisite cantillation special for Tisha B’av. We dim the lights, which reflects our darkened mood, so **please bring a flashlight** to follow the texts.

The next morning, we join together for Shacharit Morning services, again with Kinot beginning at 9:00 A.M. and ending about 10:30 A.M. Tallit and Tefillin are not worn, but we add a Torah reading and Haftarah, again with the special Tisha B’av cantillation.

After Tisha B’av is Shabbat Nachamu, the Shabbat of Comfort, August 3-4, which begins a seven week period of consolation, self-examination, and re-commitment to the community and spiritual optimism, culminating on September 16 with Rosh Hoshana.