



A V  
JULY/AUGUST  
A Time To Break Down  
And A Time To Build Up



**Bring:** The Book of Lamentations\* in the Hebrew Bible; copies of poems, stories, songs about exile and destruction; a large piece of fabric; four wooden poles for making a *huppah* (canopy); Hebrew alphabet letters cut from colored paper or cloth; needles, thread, scissors; drawing paper, colored pens, pencils; chart of the Hebrew alphabet; *hallot* baked in the shape of Hebrew letters.

**Setting:** An oasis in the *midbar* (desert), away from the late afternoon sun. Any outdoor or indoor location with added desert associations: a real cactus or photos of Bedouin, camels, red sandstone rock formations, an oasis, suggesting a dry barren place.

**Themes for Av**

**Keeper:** The essence of *Av* is contained in its name meaning "father." In Hebrew, it is written *aleph* and *beth*.

During *Av*, we mark the destruction of the Temple in the first and the sixth centuries, B.C.E., by sitting on low stools or on the bare floor, just as if we sat *shivah*. We are reduced to the dry earth and to our beginnings. We rediscover the life process from its origin—the Creation. We shall not fear descent into darkness, into the narrow canyon of the unknown.

But how do we begin when all which preceded us has been destroyed? After the Holocaust, some believed Judaism and Jews had ceased to be. In truth, one chapter in history had come to an end. Now we begin anew from *aleph-bet*, the two letters of the month of *Av*. We find our genesis by initiating a creative process.

*Av* conveys the themes of destruction and creativity through the holidays we observe during the month. We move from the funereal atmosphere of the destruction of the Temple on *Tisha B'Av*, the Ninth of *Av*, to the joyous mood of *Tu B'Av*, the Fifteenth of *Av*, when the young unmarried women and men of Jerusalem would come to the vineyards and dance. Marriages sprung up like wildflowers from this meeting.<sup>1</sup> With the hope of future generations embodied in this festival, the month of *Av* encompasses the cycle of life to death.

**Sign for Av:** *Aryeh*, the Lion. *Aryeh* is related to Ariel, the name which the prophet Isaiah gave to the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The majesty of the lion can be seen as a metaphor for the Temple. The lion is a fierce fighter, symbolizing the endurance of our people.

\*Refer for preparation. During the hot summer in Eretz Israel in the desert when growth is at a low ebb, one learns to note another concept of fertility—that of mind and spirit embodied in the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.