

This Sunday, July 24, is the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tamuz*. This date marks the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70ce, the day on which the Romans breached the walls encircling the city. Following 3 weeks of fighting, the Temple was burned on the 9<sup>th</sup> of *Av*. This period of semi-mourning is known therefore as the "three weeks" or in Rabbinic literature as *Ben Ha-M'tzarim*. While *Tisha B'av* is considered one of the major fast days, *Shiva Asar b'Tamuz* (17<sup>th</sup> of *Tamuz*) is considered one of the minor fast days - a fast from sunrise to sunset without any of the additional restrictions associated with the major fast days.

The Talmudic discussion regarding the future commemoration of the day incorporates a certain dynamism - this day will eventually be one of rejoicing. There is a dispute over when this historic change will occur: When the Jews are restored to their land and are a sovereign power? When Israel will live at peace with her neighbors? When the Temple will be rebuilt? Many in the Conservative movement feel that in light of the establishment of the state of Israel and the reunification of Jerusalem we can no longer fast as we have always done and therefore a custom has developed of fasting for half a day until after the *Minha* (afternoon) prayers. (These issues are discussed in the Responsa of The Rabbinical Assembly of Israel Law Committee - 5746).

In preparation for the fast, we will be offering an additional meal on *Motzei Shabbat*. On Sunday, our camp times for daily *Minha/Ma'ariv* will be different. We will be praying in the Bet Knesset *Minha G'dola* on Sunday at 1:33pm. (followed by a lunch option) and *Ma'ariv* at 8:58pm (followed by a dinner option). As we are a halakhically pluralist movement, please be considerate of people observing the full traditional fast until nightfall, as well as those who decide to break the fast in the afternoon and those who don't fast at all.

At any rate, as it is visiting day, we hope that as families come together, there will be cause for exultation and may this be the day when Elijah the prophet "reconciles parents with children and children with their parents" (Malakhi 3:24) so that we may merit the final redemption.

In the words of the prophet *Zehariah*: "Thus said the Lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month [*Tamuz*], the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month, shall become occasions for joy and gladness, happy festivals for the House of Judah."

R' Shlomo