

Tisha B'Av – Pre-Eicha Evening Program

Instructions: The Tzevet member(s) should first distribute copies of the picture of the relief from the Arch of Titus. He/she read the introduction as a way to set the mood and prompt the campers to think. As the intro is somewhat lengthy, it may need to be done somewhat interactively, teasing out answers from chanichim/chanichot, in order to hold their interest.

After the introduction is finished, copies of the passages from Eicha should be quickly distributed to the campers. Depending on the age and reading ability of the campers, either the madrichim/madrichot or the chanichim/chanichot should read the passages aloud. Ideally, this reading will be done as dramatically as possible. Therefore, either madrichim/madrichot should offer a dramatic reading, alternating between readers, or they should encourage the chanichim/chanichot who read to do so with the kind of emotion they might imagine feeling at this time.

Once the passages have been read, the blank paper and pens should be distributed. Campers can be given the option of creating a piece of art (though they only will have pen and paper for this), rather than writing something. Madrichim/madrichot should work hard to maintain total quiet during the writing/thinking portion of the pe'ulah, in order to offer the best chance for real contemplation. Asking campers to find an individual quiet spot can often be most effective in this case. If there is time remaining after this, ask volunteers to share their reflections.

Introductory remarks to be read by madrich/madrichah:

You're about to read and listen to a series of passages that are taken from the book of Eicha, or Lamentations, from which we will be reading later this evening. This book tells of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash, or Holy Temple, by the Babylonians in the year 586 B.C.E. The Temple was later rebuilt, but destroyed again by the Romans in 70 C.E. These events changed Jewish life and practice forever.

Imagine you, *personally*, are living in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. You have watched as the Romans crept closer to the city, invaded and then laid waste to the beloved Holy Temple and beautiful majesty of Judaism's holiest places. Jerusalem, all at once the administrative capital, the cultural capital, the religious capital, even the entertainment capital, of the Jewish people, has been destroyed. The place you and your parents and grandparents grew up to love, where you celebrated holidays, danced, sang, played, and prayed, now lies in ruins. You will soon become slaves to the Romans or be forced to flee.

As we read these passages below, by imagining yourself in these circumstances, you can hopefully come to understand the feelings that are present for Jews at this time. There are of course feelings of deep sadness for the fate of Jerusalem and the suffering of so

many Jews. There is hopelessness. Never before have the Jews of these generations had to think about what it might be like to be a Jew without the right to live freely in Jerusalem, and the rest of Eretz Yisrael. How will life continue?

There are also feelings of tremendous anger. There is anger at the Romans, anger at oneself and one's fellow Jews for the way they had been treating one another for years, even though the prophets had warned them that their hateful words and actions would bring doom upon their people. There is also anger at Hashem, for punishing all Jews so severely by allowing the Romans to conquer Jerusalem, deface its holy places, and make its people suffer. Out of such anger at themselves and at God also comes feelings of repentance, of hoping to do better in the future, to reconcile themselves to each other and to God in order to one day return to Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash as a free people. Finally, there is the desire among the Jews of this time for their suffering and their fate to be remembered by future generations, just as we are doing here tonight.

As we think about these feelings, consider what your own feelings at this time would be, look deep within yourself to discover this. Look at the above sculpture from the Arch of Titus in Rome. This arch was erected to celebrate the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. You can see Romans pictured carrying off sacred Jewish objects with joy and pride in their faces. Think how such a sight would make you feel. Which of the above emotions would you share with many of your fellow Jews?

As you will see in a moment, the passages we are about to read sound like they come from someone's journal who lived through the horrible event of the destruction of the First Temple. When we are finished reading, take the pen and the paper and try to write your own journal entry, describing your emotions as you think they would have been. You will later be allowed to share your thoughts if you like, but no one will be required to do so.

Passages from Eicha:

(Ch. 1, Verse 8:)

Grievously has Jerusalem sinned,
Therefore has she been banished.
All who once respected her treat her as worthless,
For they have seen her nakedness.
Indeed, she herself groans,
And turns away.

(Ch. 1, Verse 16:)

For these things do I sob,
My eyes, my eyes flow with water.
For far from me is any comforter,
Anyone to keep me alive.
My children are desolate,
For the enemy has prevailed.

(Ch. 2, Verse 5)

The LORD became an enemy,
He poised his right hand like a foe.
And he killed all the treasured ones.
On Dear Zion's tent
He poured out his wrath like a fire.

(Ch. 2, Verse 13:)

How can I affirm you, what can I liken to you,
Dear Jerusalem?
What can I compare to you so that I may console you,
Dear Maiden Zion?
For as vast as the sea is your devastation.
Who can heal you?

(Ch. 2, Verse 17:)

The LORD did what he planned,
He carried out his word,
As he ordained long ago.
He destroyed and showed no mercy.
And he made the enemy rejoice over you,
He raised the horn of your foes.

(Ch. 3, Verses 19-24:)

Remember my misery and trouble –
Wormwood and bitterness.
I well remember (them) myself,
And I am downcast.
This do I tell myself,
Therefore I have hope.

The LORD's acts of loyalty have not ended,
His compassion is not used up.
They are renewed every morning;
Vast is your faithfulness.
My portion is the LORD, I say to myself,
Therefore I hope in him.

(Ch. 4, Verse 1)

Alas, the gold is dulled,
The purest gold has lost its luster.
The holy gems are strewn
At every street corner.

(Ch. 4, Verse 11)

The LORD brought his wrath to its peak,
He poured out his hot anger,
And he kindled a fire in Zion
And consumed its foundations.